

Frenchtown Administrative Commission

Presbytery of New Brunswick

Status Report to Presbytery

Prepared May 30, 2019

The Commission found that well-meaning people in the congregation, on the Session, in the Presbytery and even the pastors made mistakes which escalated into a situation leading to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Courtney Cromie and the Frenchtown Presbyterian Church.

Unity and Diversity in One Body (from 1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

¹²For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For in fact the body is not one member but many.

The body of the Presbyterian Church consists of many churches organized into regional Presbyteries which provide support and the critical mass to fulfill Christ's ministry in the world. The Frenchtown Presbyterian Church (FPC) is a pastor-centered church in a small town on the Delaware river. In 2018, when FPC's pastor resigned after encountering difficulties in the transition of pastoral leadership, the Presbytery formed an Administrative Commission to:

1. review and investigate the events in the congregation and the session revealed by the dissolution of the pastoral relationship,
2. work with the Session to restore the congregation to peace and unity,
3. help the Session find a capable and experienced Transitional Pastor, and
4. when the time comes, support and guide the next Pastor Nominating Committee.

Activities

The AC was authorized at the June 2018 Presbytery meeting and held its formation meeting on July 2, 2018. It met 25 times in 2018 and has met 9 times so far in 2019. In addition, members of the AC have attended 9 Session meetings, a congregational meeting, 2 services of ordination and installation, and several representatives attended worship services at Frenchtown.

Initially, Rev. John Potter provided pulpit supply on one occasion and moderated the Session July through September. The AC arranged other pulpit supply and pastoral care from July to September when a transitional pastor was hired.

The AC reorganized the Session and is serving as the Personnel Committee. In 2018, reviews were conducted for 7 staff members.

To learn about the congregation and understand the events that led to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Courtney Cromie and the Frenchtown Presbyterian Church, the AC conducted listening sessions with 38 members of the congregation. Outside of its AC meetings, the AC members also met with the Committee on Ministry (CoM) liaisons, interviewed past pastors and interims, past and present CoM chairs, the Executive Presbyter, and the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. The AC also read past minutes, letters, and other documents, some going back over 5 years.

The AC has drafted a report and timeline which it plans to release at a future date. In order to receive feedback and correction from those named in the report, the AC conducted 9 hearings with over 20 individuals.

Although it has taken nearly a year to work and pray through this process, this volunteer team has helped the Frenchtown Presbyterian Church Session accomplish the following:

- Hire Rev. Nancy Asbury as a ¾ time transitional pastor. (She has provided stability, especially in the worship experience and is the moderator of the session. The transitional pastor role has been an important step to enable healing, peace, and unity.)
- Sustain the church's ministry and welcome back some members who had left during the previous year.
- Revise the 2018 budget, prepare and rent out the manse, liquidate some investments, enhance financial reporting, and prepare a 2019 budget.
- Revisit the relationship with the Fargo Foundation, seeking a way to enhance the ministry of the church without becoming dependent.

The congregation has responded with increased giving and met the revised 2018 budget, restoring some financial stability after 5 years of deficit budgets. The AC believes God's grace has been on this process.